



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 50004 Rm. 4-118
Honolulu, HI 96850
808-541-2600

**Pacific Islands Area
State Technical Committee Meeting (STAC)**

February 23, 2011

Attendees:

Name:

Agency:

Oahu:

Jeffrey Harlow	USDA-NRCS
Barbara Fossum	USDA-NRCS
Kara Nelson	USDA-NRCS
Jenny Fujimoto	USDA-NRCS
Steve Peterson	FSA
Henry Fong	FSA
Benton Pang	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Carl Evensen	UH, CTAHR

Hilo:

Jessica Newpher	USDA-NRCS
Laura Brezinsky	Participant
Lehua Angay	USDA-NRCS
Mike Robinson	Dept. of Hawaiian Homelands

Kona:

Jessica Sternfels	USDA-NRCS
Nick Gallo	USDA-NRCS
Mary Robblee	Kona SWCD
Bernard Matatumua-Vermeulen	USDA-NRCS

Kahului:

Ranae Ganske-Cerizo	USDA-NRCS
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Guam:

Bart Lawrence	USDA-NRCS
Kurencio Ngowaki	USDA-NRCS
Joe Takai	USDA-NRCS
Bob Barber	Univ. of Guam, CES
Ronald Quitugua	Guam SWCD

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Welcome & Introduction:

Jeff Harlow

FY 2011 Farm Bill Program Updates & Application Deadlines:

Jeff Harlow

EQIP: March 21, May 18

EQIP Organics: May 20th

AMA: March 21, May 18

WHIP: March 21, May 18

CSP: May 27th need to be obligated

AWEP: None in PIA

CCPI: None in PIA

GRP: June 30

WRP: June 30

FRPP: June 30

Comments:

- Why is the AMA program only in Hawaii? This is how the federal statute is written. To include other areas, Congress will need to act to make this change.
- Additional forest initiatives and funding. How to increase this funding. We will look into additional programs to add on.

NRCS National & State Priorities:

Kara Nelson explained the handout “Identify PIA Priority Resource Concerns”.

Comments:

- Where does invasive species (pests, animals) fit? These still fit into the plant area because there is no specific pest area at this time.
- Where does watershed fit in? There is a need to identify what the specific problem is and why the watershed is not healthy.
- Water quality issues and looking for ways to help farmers catch the rain water. Need to look at undeveloped areas where there is no infrastructure.
- Ranking of water quality based on your need.
- What will happen to the bottom 5 concerns, if we are ranking just the top 5 concerns? It was decided that all 9 concerns should be ranked accordingly.
- A recent survey was done in Guam which included the coastal areas and it was ranked as follows: 1) water quality; 2) erosion; 3) invasive species.

Partner Agency/Organization Reports:

Steve Peterson – FSA

- FSA delivered over \$17.4 million in federal program payments and loans to Hawaii and Pacific Basin’s farmers and ranchers in FY 2010.
- \$609,000 in Emergency Conservation Program funds providing emergency funding and technical assistance for farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by natural disasters.

- Conservation Reserve Program and Hawaii Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, \$27,000 was paid in annual rental payments. 2011 sign-up will run from Mar. 14-Apr. 15.
- \$324,000 Grassland Reserve Program
- \$224,000 was paid out for Livestock Indemnity Program that compensates producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather. Taking 2011 applications now.
- Nearly \$8.9 million for Livestock Forage Program that provides financial assistance for producers who suffered grazing losses due to drought.
- \$345,000 for Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program provides benefits for farm revenue losses due to natural disaster.
- \$880,000 Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops in the event of weather-related crop losses.
- Other programs include the Tree Assistance Program to compensate for lost or damaged trees and the newly announced Emergency Forestry Restoration Program to carry out emergency measures on Nonindustrial Private Forest.
- Biomass Crop Assistance Program has two parts, the harvest/collection/transportation and storage matching funds up to \$45/ton purchased from an approved biomass conversion facility, and the establishment and annual rental for new production.
- Reimbursement Transportation Cost Payment Program for Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers assists farmers and ranchers who paid to transport either an agricultural commodity or an input used to produce an agricultural commodity. \$1.3 million in applications is being processed this week.

Comments:

- We have a new farmer curriculum on Guam by working with FSA, NRCS and local agencies here. Looking at farm planning, soil and water conservation, agro forestry. We are trying to develop a curriculum that utilizes all these different agencies for the benefit of the farmer.
- Is anyone present from the Department of Defense (DOD)? This is a concern because they do control along on the land here on Guam. We need a way to engage them and get them more actively involved in conservation practices on these properties. We hope to have a representative from the DOD at our next STAC meeting.

Mike Robinson – Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (Hilo/Hamakua)

- We are trying to engage more farmers in NRCS programs. Our problem with less funding for SWCD's. We are working with the Mayor to increase this funding.
- Encounter different problems in engaging beneficiaries in NRCS programs who are on Hawaiian Home Lands. Problems in providing manpower support for these beneficiaries in filling out paperwork and documents. Would like to find a way for more of them to participate in NRCS programs. Local NRCS staff have been more than helpful. Need more people to work on a one-on-one basis with these individuals. We have over 20,000 homesteaders and at least 5,000 ag producers.

Comments:

- Must realize that there is a many potential participants and a very limited number of staff. The staff in Hilo is too small, just not enough.

Carl Evensen – UH CTAHR

- College of Tropical Agriculture is the land grant college for the State of Hawaii. We have ten offices through the major islands. We lost 15 faculty members during the year, but we are in the process of hiring 14 new faculty members.
- We provide important services in terms of research and extension work in nutrient studies, pest management, soil and water conservation, erosivity of soils, coastal management (example: land based pollution of our coral reefs).
- Also deal with current issues and new pests in Hawaii. For example the coffee bearer borer has been identified by the CTAHR staff working with the State Dept. of Agriculture.
- Recent basil downy mildew that has been introduced and could wipe out the basil crop here. I would like to ask all field staff to please notice things that are out of the ordinary and to bring this to our attention. We need to work together on research and education efforts before it gets out of hand.
- Recently, the Korean Nature Farming is a client driven issue on the Big Island for NRCS. There doesn't seem to be any scientific basis on the practices. We need to partner with NRCS and NRCS RC&D as demonstrations are implemented. Need to also have science behind what we do.

Benton Pang – US Fish & Wildlife Service

- Restoration funding available.
- Our priority is threatened endangered species and their habitats.
- Recently we encountered on the Big Island an endangered plant which was one of 2 in the world and there was a goat problem in this area. We partnered with NRCS where NRCS took over much of the compliance issues. This was a very successful partnering of our agencies.
- Also coastal program for coastal areas and coral reefs.
- Specific for Hawaii are the Recovery Land Acquisition and the Fish Habitat Funding programs.
- Need ways to streamline safe harbors.
- We have a great partnership with NRCS and look forward to continuing and increasing our partnership.

Other Comments:

- Why is the Farm Bill not prioritized for forest issues? There are not enough funds for forest issues. How can you be considered "high" priority for forestry issues?
- Concerns about technical service providers (TSP) and control of land. Where are we in addressing consistent lease and documentation? Jeff and Bart will work together on this issue.
- I spoke with Larry Yamamoto regarding concerns with the payment schedules for the EQIP program. There seems to be problems with the averaging of numbers. These numbers are part of the reason EQIP contacts can't get obligated. Is anyone working on separate payment schedules for the different islands, this is more realistic?
- There can be as many payment schedules as needed to service the Pacific Islands. We have made an attempt for 2011, but there are some components that differ in the West and the East. For 2012, which we are working on now, we will be visiting the cost issue problems closely. The problems also arise for previous year contracts, these contracts have to use the payment schedule from that particular contract year. We will revisit this soon. Kara is on board and she is in charge of creating this payment schedule. We hope to have a much better payment schedule for 2012.

Discussion and Closing Remarks – Jeff Harlow